

Message Text

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ACTION EA-06

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1095

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BANGKOK 6732

LIMDIS

FOR EA AND HA ONLY

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SREF
SUBJECT: OPIATE TESTING AMONG HMONG REFUGEES

REF: BANGKOK 1415

1. SUMMARY. UPON THE CONCLUSION OF OUR FIRST
SERIES OF THREE URINE TESTS TO DETECT OPIUM ADDICTION
AMONG HMONG ALREADY APPROVED BY INS, A SUBSTANTIAL
NUMBER APPEAR SUSCEPTIBLE TO DISQUALIFICATION FOR
NARCOTICS USAGE. FOR THOSE WHOSE BIOS HAVE ALREADY
BEEN SENT AND SPONSORS OBTAINED, NOTIFICATION TO
SPONSORS THAT THE REFUGEES HAVE BEEN REJECTED WILL BE
IN ORDER. FOR THE HMONG AS A WHOLE, ADDICTION COULD
POTENTIALLY DISQUALIFY SEVERAL HUNDRED CASES.
END SUMMARY.

2. ICEM BEGAN TESTING FOR OPIUM USAGE AMONG THE
HMONG AT NONGKHAI JANUARY 17 AND THEN FOLLOWED AT OTHER
CAMPS (REFTEL). THE RESULTS OF THE FIRST TESTS AT ALL
CAMPS, AND OF THE SECOND AND THIRD ROUNDS AT NONGKHAI
FOLLOW.

ROUND I ROUND II AND III

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	TESTED POSITIVE	TESTED POSITIVE
JAN 17 NONGKHAI	375 95	95 43
JAN 25 NAM YAO	196 103	
JAN 30 CHIENG KHAM	41 20	
JAN 31 CHIENG KHONG	98 30	
FEB 7 LOEI	529 96	

3. THE FIGURE OF 43 POSITIVE AT THE CONCLUSION OF ROUNDS II AND III AT NONGKHAI REPRESENTS OVER TEN PERCENT OF THOSE INITIALLY TESTED. THIS TOTAL INCLUDES 35 WHOSE NARCOGRAM READINGS WERE EXCESSIVE ON ALL THREE OCCASIONS, AND AN ADDITIONAL EIGHT WHOSE READINGS WARRANT FURTHER INVESTIGATION.

4. IF THE THIRD ROUND PERCENTAGE RESULTS AT NONGKHAI HOLD AT THAT LEVEL FOR THE SECOND AND THIRD TESTS AT THE REMAINING CAMPS, WE COULD BE FACED WITH THE POSSIBILITY OF RECOMMENDING THAT INS CANCEL THE APPROVALS OF SOME 200-400 HMONG FAMILIES OR BETWEEN 750 AND 1500 PEOPLE. (THERE ARE POTENTIALLY 4000 HMONG WHO MAY BE APPROVED UNDER IPP-77.) WE WOULD ALSO HAVE TO NOTIFY SOME CONFIRMED SPONSORS OF REFUGEE INADMISSABILITY BECAUSE OF NARCOTICS USAGE.

5. IF SOME OF THOSE SCREENED AS POSITIVE ARE NOT PRINCIPAL APPLICANTS, WE MAY BE ABLE TO BREAK THEM OUT OF OTHERWISE ADMISSIBLE FAMILY GROUPS. WE ARE REVIEWING THIS CONTINGENCY NOW.

6. FIGURES ON POSITIVES DURING THE FIRST ROUND TESTS AT LOEI WERE SIGNIFICANTLY LOWER THAN AT OTHER CAMPS. WE CAN ONLY GUESS AT THE REASON. WORD MAY HAVE GOTTEN OUT ABOUT THE TESTS, OR THE TESTS MIGHT

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ACCURATELY REFLECT A LOWER USAGE THERE.

7. THE TESTING PROCEDURES THUS FAR SEEM REASONABLY RELIABLE. BEFORE GETTING THE SECOND AND THIRD SAMPLES IN THE CAMPS, A NURSE MATCHES THE NAME ON THE POSITIVE LIST TO A PHOTOGRAPH WITH THE NAME OF THE INDIVIDUAL. SUBSEQUENTLY, SHE TAKES THE TEMPERATURE OF THE SAMPLE AND REJECTS IT IF IT IS NOT BODY TEMPERATURE. THE ONLY WAY TO FURTHER TIGHTEN THIS STEP IN THE PROCEDURE WOULD BE TO HAVE SOMEONE PRESENT WITH THE REFUGEE WHEN HE FURNISHES THE SAMPLE, A TACTIC FOR WHICH THERE IS NEITHER STAFF NOR VOLUNTEERS. AT THE SEATO LAB IN BANGKOK WHERE THE URINE IS ANALYZED, ANY POSITIVE READING IS EITHER DOUBLE OR TRIPLE CHECKED FOR ACCURACY. DESPITE THESE MEASURES, WHEN THE RESULTS OF THE TESTS LEAD TO INS REJECTIONS, REFUGEES CAN BE COUNTED ON TO BECOME WARY AND SEEK WAYS TO INVALIDATE THE TESTS.

8. COMPLICATING THE QUESTION ARE SEVERAL TANGENTIAL ISSUES. THERE WOULD SEEM TO BE LITTLE DISPUTE OVER REJECTING THOSE WHO MEASURE THE HIGHEST POSITIVE

NARCOGRAM READINGS ON EACH OF THE THREE SCREENINGS.
EVEN HERE THERE IS SOME MARGIN FOR ERROR, HOWEVER.
A HIGH POSITIVE READING CAN BE REGISTERED BY SOMEONE
SIMPLY TAKING A CODEINE-BASED COUGH MEDICINE. LOWER
SCORES, WHICH OBVIOUSLY INDICATE THE PRESENCE IN
THE SYSTEM OF AN OPIATE, MAY BE THE RESULT OF
EXPERIMENTATION, OCCASIONAL USE, OR ADDICTION.

9. AMONG THE HMONG, OPIUM IS TRADITIONALLY USED AS
AN EFFECTIVE PAIN KILLER FOR ANY VARIETY OF ACHES
AND PAINS. WHETHER SUCH USAGE EITHER
CONSTITUTES ADDICTION OR SHOULD BE GROUNDS FOR
EXCLUSION, IS QUESTIONABLE.

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10. FINALLY, WE UNDERSTAND THAT PAST EXPERIENCE INDICATES
HABITUAL USAGE AMONG THE HMONG IS RELATIVELY EASY TO CURE,
AND THAT THE FRENCH ARE RUNNING THEIR OWN DETOXIFICATION
PROGRAM. WHERE OPIUM IS NO LONGER AVAILABLE, THE
SUPPOSED "ADDICTION" CEASES. RONALD DRAGO,
THE JVR REPRESENTATIVE IN BANGKOK, WORKED CLOSELY
WITH THE HMONG IN SEATTLE FOR OVER A YEAR. HE STATES
THAT THERE WAS NOT A DRUG PROBLEM AMONG THEM AFTER ARRIVAL.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BANGKOK 6732

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FOR EA AND HA ONLY

11. AT PRESENT WE HAVE CEASED TO FORWARD, THE BIOS OF INS-APPROVED HMONG UNTIL WE LEARN THE RESULTS OF THE OPIATE SCREENING. JVR IS NOTIFYING CVA THAT THOSE FILES ALREADY SENT FORWARD BETWEEN DEC 8 AND FEB 8 ARE TO BE HELD PENDING MEDICAL CLEARANCE. WE RECOMMEND THAT THE DEPARTMENT ALSO DISCUSS THIS PROBLEM WITH ACVA.

12. WE WILL PROCEED AS FOLLOWS: WE HAVE DESIGNATED ETHNIC AFFAIRS OFFICER SCHOEPFER TO INTERVIEW ALL THOSE WHOSE TEST RESULTS SUPPORT A SUSPICION OF DRUG ABUSE. HE WILL TELL THOSE WITH CONSISTENTLY HIGH NARCOGRAM SCORES THAT THEIR CASES ARE UNDER REVIEW BECAUSE OF SUSPICION OF CHRONIC DRUG USE. HE WILL INTERVIEW THOSE IN THE QUESTIONABLE CATEGORY TO DETERMINE THE NATURE OF THE DRUG USE. SUBJECT TO ANY DEPARTMENT COMMENT, THE ICEM DOCTOR AND THE DEPUTY REFUGEE COORDINATOR WILL REVIEW THE FINDINGS AND MAKE DETERMINATION WHETHER TO CANCEL THE INS APPROVAL.

13. WE DO NOT AT THIS TIME ANTICIPATE THAT THIS DEVELOPMENT, EVEN IF IT RESULTS IN SEVERAL HUNDRED ALREADE APPROVED HMONG BECOMING DISQUALIFIED, WILL REQUIRE ANOTHER ROUND OF EXTENSIVE INS INLAND CONFIDENTIAL

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CAMP INTERVIEWS AFTER MARCH 15. ALL CATEGORY III APPROVALS SINCE MID-JANUARY ARE CONDITIONAL. WE ARE INFORMING THOSE CATEGORY III CONDITIONALLY APPROVED REFUGEES WHOSE QUALIFICATION POINTS FALL BELOW A CERTAIN NUMBER THAT THEIR CONDITIONAL APPROVALS ARE EXTREMELY TENUOUS. WE ARE NEVERTHELESS FINGERPRINTING AND PHOTOGRAPHING THEM, PLUS DOING OPIATE TESTING ON THE HMONG AMONG THEM. WE THUS WILL HAVE A POOL OF REFUGEES TO DRAW ON SHOULD HMONG DISQUALIFICATIONS BECOME NUMERICALLY SIGNIFICANT.
WHITEHOUSE

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